

Lincoln Memorial

Washington, D.C.
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Lincoln: The Person

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky, and became the 16th President of the United States, leading his country through its greatest trial, the Civil War. His life was full of personal tragedy and disappointment, but his belief in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and his experience gained as a state legislator, a lawyer, and as a Congressman, along with a whimsical sense of humor, gave him the strength to endure. Throughout his political career Lincoln strove to maintain

the ideals of the Nation's founders. He saw slavery as hypocritical for a Nation founded on the principle that "all men are created equal." In an 1854 speech he said: "I hate it [slavery] because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites." As President he used the power of the office to preserve the Union. In freeing the slaves, Lincoln left a legacy to freedom that is one of the most enduring birthrights Americans possess.